

RIVERS are LIFE

reflecting on our first year

July 2023

In "Wings of the Oder," Piotr Chara paddles into Poland's Oder River to photograph its threatened wild birds.



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LOOKING BACK, AIMING FORWARD

We made it. One year has passed since Rivers are Life was created to help bring awareness to our planet's waterways and the people working to protect them, and what a year it has been.

In July of 2022, Rivers are Life launched as a collective of stories. We produced films that captured the passion and power of those we call River Heroes. Our mission was simple – to amplify theirs – and it remains the same today.

By sharing the initial series of narratives, we banked on the idea that inspiration is contagious. With every message amplified, we were wonderstruck by all the work being done in watersheds around the world and hoped that in highlighting these efforts, the people leading the way might be able to accomplish even more.

The more we learned about these vastly varying individuals, and organizations, we realized their work was just as diverse as river systems themselves.

This work seemed not only meaningful, but necessary, as freshwater ecosystems, some of the most biodiverse environments on the planet, are also the most threatened. In fact, freshwater species populations have declined by 83% since the 1970s according to recent reports.¹

¹ WWF's Living Planet Report 2022

With all of this in mind, we sought out more stories and more ways to support.

We are committed to supporting 1,000 Projects: locally-led initiatives that seek to address river-related threats, including plastic pollution, ecosystem protection, misinformation, and more.

Rivers are Life grew, and grew quickly. In fact, we are still growing. Our list of River Heroes continues to expand and we hope to encourage and empower these Heroes even more moving forward, seeking out new and better ways to support them. In doing so, we are working to define exactly what we are and how we function.

Our team continues to explore the best ways to take these stories off-screen, encouraging meaningful actions in the name of rivers led by those who know them best. We're also committed to operating in the most sustainable, responsible way possible. As we take big steps to strategize how to do just that, we're hopeful that by this time next year, our impact will be even more substantial.

There's an old adage that says,

“you never step in the same river twice.”

Rivers are real, ever-flowing embodiments of the idea that the only real constant in life is change. It is by this ethos that we not only embrace change within the Rivers are Life movement but aim for it. We're going with the flow, so to speak, and trusting that if we paddle along with it, it will take us exactly where we need to be.

With gratitude from the entire Rivers are Life team,



Julia Regeski, Rivers are Life Impact Manager

“El Río Es Familia” not only shares a stunning story about a local fight to protect a waterway, but it also offers stunning views of the Valle de Elqui.

WHO WE ARE

Rivers are Life is a network of individuals, nonprofit organizations and corporate partners that are invested in the protection of rivers around the world.

When Rivers are Life was formed one year ago, we understood the urgent need to bring attention to the true force and fragility of our river systems and inspire everyone to collectively act and treat them as the irreplaceable resources they are.

Our mission is to raise awareness of the importance of our planet's rivers and use our resources to support individuals and organizations leveraging innovative ways to improve, protect, and preserve them in their local communities.

Our vision is to usher in a new era of modern river conservation by showcasing our planet's river systems and celebrating the River Heroes who are working to protect them.

By establishing a platform that cultivates a human connection with rivers around the world, we aim to empower individuals, local organizations, and businesses to take action in support of river ecosystems around the world.

In "From Mumbai with Love," collaboration and cleanups are resulting in a more sustainable, circular economy.



OUR FUTURE

We seek to raise awareness of innovative solutions onstream, upstream, and downstream. Everything from trash cleanups and shore restoration to wildlife conservation and curbing waste — all support the health and wellness of river ecosystems. We are helping to protect the most vital habitat on earth while removing pollutants from the very sources that feed into our oceans and way of life.

Knowing that cumulatively, individual restoration projects can make a global difference, Rivers are Life's goal to support 1,000 Projects focuses on the vast and diverse protection efforts of our precious river ecosystems, waterways, and wildlife across the world.



FILMS

Visual content produced by Rivers are Life, which bring broad-scale awareness to Projects all over the world that are producing real, positive impact on vital river systems.



1,000 PROJECTS

From small, community-focused initiatives to large, collaborative actions, Rivers are Life Projects make a positive impact on the river ecosphere. Each Project is scalable through the support of a coalition of public and private sector collaborators who share common values and goals. Our Projects often focus on education, water quality, and ecosystem health, as well as solutions to address waste.



RIVER HEROES

River Heroes are individuals, organizations and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference in local communities — one project at a time. Our River Heroes are knowledgeable, community-based advocates making a difference in science, technology, human impact, wildlife, natural biodiversity, and more.



In "Keepers of the North," Alaskan volunteers go to great lengths to remove hard-to-reach trash from the rugged state's coastlines.

ESG COMMITMENTS FOR RIVERS ARE LIFE



UPLIFTING WATERWAYS

Rivers are Life is guided by a singular goal – to support those supporting our planet’s rivers. By amplifying the efforts of River Heroes to improve the quality of our planet’s waterways, it is important to our organization and supporters to ensure that our work is, in fact, effective and helpful. As we continue to grow and assess our impact, we will define key metrics to better understand how our work impacts River Heroes and the waterways they serve.



CARBON FOOTPRINT

We will develop a process to evaluate the impact of our carbon footprint of our operations and activities. Our team currently operates remotely so our primary impact on climate is through our travel and our vendors’ travel.

- In 2023-24, we will develop a methodology to measure our own travel impacts and will offset carbon emissions from that travel.
- We will also develop a methodology to track the carbon footprint of travel from our filming partners.
- In 2024-25, we will develop a methodology to track and report our Scope 1 and 2 emissions.



WASTE

Whenever possible, we will eliminate single use plastics, including straws and bottles in any meetings hosted by Rivers are Life.



CREATING A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE

As we expand our organization and become a standalone entity, we will establish a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. In 2023-24, we will adopt a DE&I policy consistent with these principles.



FAIR WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

We will adopt a fair wage and employment practices policy for our organization.



ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS FOR VENDORS AND PARTNERS

We will prioritize working with contractors who also adhere to and implement fair wages and anti-discriminatory employment practices.



TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNANCE

We aim for our funding to be distributed in a transparent and responsible manner, with the hope that our support and Projects benefit an inclusive cross-section of diverse, equitable communities, accessible for those who need them.



OUR FIRST YEAR

There's more work to be done, but we're also proud of Rivers are Life's first year. We want to take a moment to recognize our River Heroes, celebrate their leadership, and inspire many more. Here's the impact we've witnessed in just our first year together.



4

Projects completed to-date



103M+

Views and impressions across films



10

Films highlighting River Heroes and their impact across 5 continents



3.7M+

Total engagements across social media



15

River Heroes spotlighted through various Projects



40K+

Subscribers and followers on social




600K

Estimated miles of rivers highlighted across the world

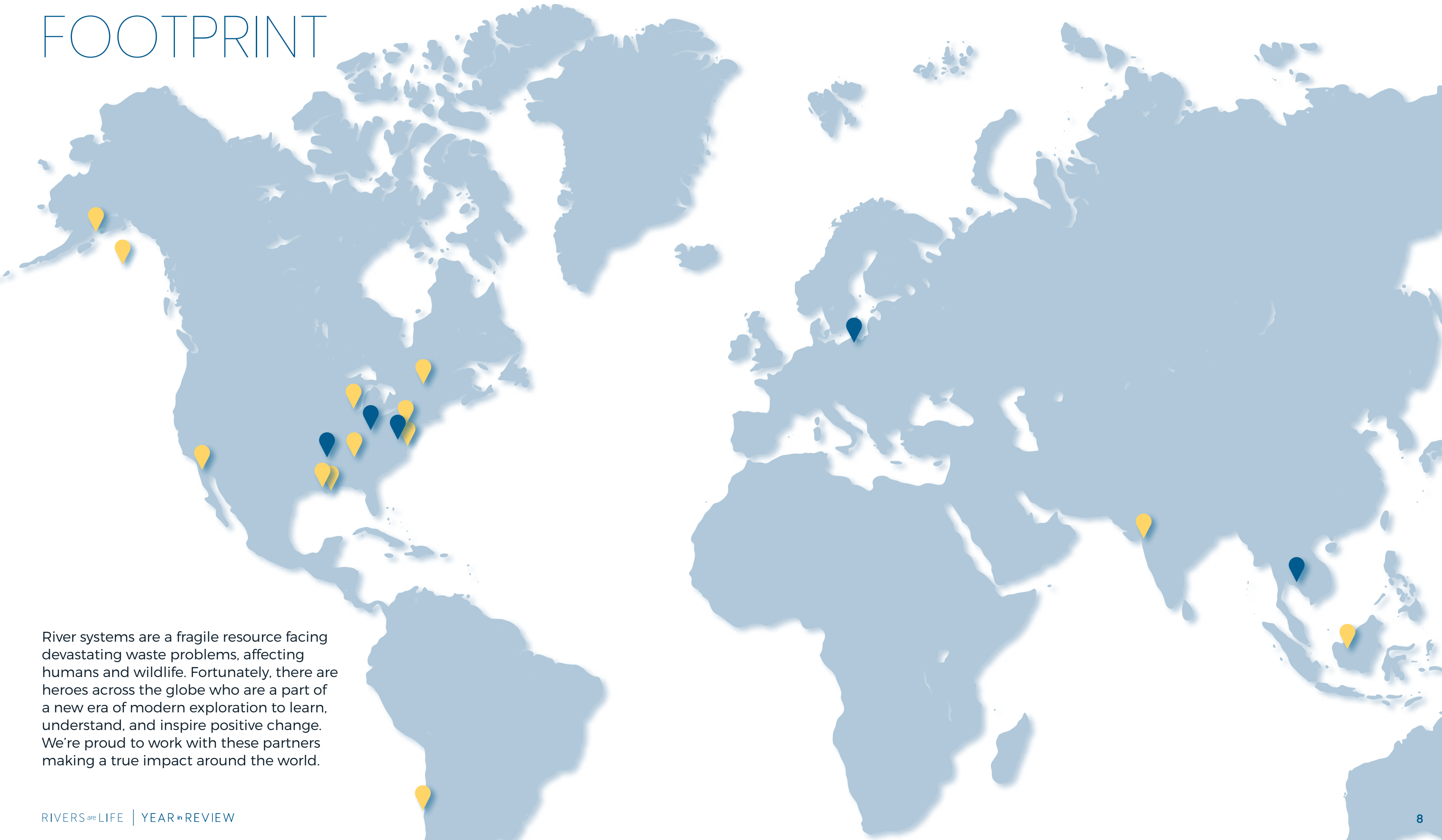
Ducks and other wildlife depend on clean waterways, as evidenced by the thriving river featured in "Mr. Trash Wheel."



OUR GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

 Launched Projects, Films, and River Heroes

 Upcoming Projects, Films, and River Heroes



River systems are a fragile resource facing devastating waste problems, affecting humans and wildlife. Fortunately, there are heroes across the globe who are a part of a new era of modern exploration to learn, understand, and inspire positive change. We're proud to work with these partners making a true impact around the world.

In "The Conservation Kid," Cash Daniels shows how he is installing custom-made bins along the Tennessee River, where fishing enthusiasts can discard their used line.



Change happens at the speed of relationships, and this is a philosophy that we bring into our daily work. RaL recognizes that partnerships are relationships that continue to grow over time. Together, we're inviting people to live, learn, and love the LA River and urban nature so we can continue a movement of environmental activism.

DENNIS MABASA

Chief Operating Officer,
Friends of the Los Angeles River



The possibilities are endless when it comes to making an impact. You can't protect what you don't love so find something you love that's worth saving whether it's water, koalas, sharks, trees, etc. You have an impact every single day and only you get to decide whether it's good or bad. If we all just left places better than we found it, our planet would be so much better off.

CASH DANIELS

Environmentalist,
The Conservation Kid



Over one million people reside in the Fox River Watershed and 300,000 people directly rely on the river as a drinking water source. After our film premiered, we realized a significant increase in website visits, Facebook visits and donations. The film's screening event was a fundraising success. We're honored to be part of Rivers are Life's initiative.

GARY SWICK

President,
Friends of the Fox River

THE PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER

Fred Tutman

Fred is a committed environmentalist with many front line experiences dealing with topical conservation issues. But before that, in 2004, Fred Tutman burned his press credentials. Working in telecommunications had been gnawing at him. He couldn't stand reporting on human suffering but doing nothing to fix or change it. He began to feel like he was part of the problem. "We amplified all the bad news. So, I decided to reinvest in my own community." That community is the Patuxent River, where Tutman's family has lived since the 1700s. Now, an outdoor adventurer and Patuxent Riverkeeper, Fred has a true passion for taking roads less traveled and protecting those roads for generations to come.



Fred is featured in the film, "Voices from the Water," where he and other River Heroes get into their diverse approaches to trash in local waterways.



Water is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. People are fighting big giant oil tankers using spears, bows and arrows, and canoes – and they're winning. That really excites me... That you could take on superior odds, and if you were skillful and knowledgeable and maybe if you had legal knowledge and some just sheer gumption, just brass – that maybe you could change the fate of something.

1

The only African-American Waterkeeper in the nation

\$500M

Nearly a half-billion dollars won in judicial penalties, fines, and preparations from polluters

\$100K

Earned in grants from the Department of Environmental Resources to help creek flooding and erosion

7th

Helped close the Brandywine coal-waste disposal site – the seventh worst in the nation

VOICES FROM THE WATER

Nathalie Lasselin

Nathalie considers herself an underwater explorer with the opportunity to witness 70% of the world with her own eyes through scuba diving. She completed the Urban Water Odyssey project in her Canadian hometown of Montreal to inspire cleanups, volunteers, and sustainable impact.



We are privileged to witness the world's rivers. Once we've seen the state of our rivers, we cannot close our eyes anymore. Whoever you are and whatever your background is, it doesn't matter because we all are a part of the solution.

42

Expeditions

249

Volunteers engaged in the Urban Water Odyssey Project

11.127

Kilograms of trash removed from Canada's St. Lawrence River



In "Nathalie Lasselin's Deep Dive," viewers join Nathalie underwater as she collects the hard-to-reach litter plaguing the St. Lawrence River.

EL RÍO ES FAMILIA

The Canihuante Family and the Valle de Elqui

Fighting for the river and the people who depend on it has been a team effort — one led by the Canihuante family. From Carmen Canihuante, who worked with politicians, lawyers, and local government agencies to petition for the Cochiguaz River's natural sanctuary status, to Rafael Canihuante, president of the Canihuante indigenous community of Cochiguaz — countless heroes are standing up for this incredible South American resource. "El Río es Familia" is not just about a river, but a community too.



You know the most important thing in life is water. It's amazing how wise nature can be. It's a lifecosystem. It's our world and it impacts the livelihood of the community. In the Valle de Elqui, Chile, mining directly impacted the quality of our community's water source and health. For us, this was a matter of life or death. We started meeting as a family in 2018 to discourage mining, create high standards for conservation, and garnered sanctuary status for the Cochiguaz River.

The film "El Río es Familia" sheds light on the Canihuante family's fight to protect their shared lands.



15

Years of drought within the Valle de Elqui

36

Archaeological findings within the valley, 17 of which are inside the sanctuary

86

Species of plants sustained by the Valle de Elqui, 99% being native or endemic

CHASING THE BONO

Dedy “Eddie” Endoni

The world’s longest tidal wave can’t be found in the ocean; it’s born from the Kampar River in Teluk Meranti, Indonesia. Known as “Bono Seven Ghosts,” this wave can run up to 13.5 miles long and has become a destination for surfers. But due to increased foot-traffic through tourism, littering, and waste – there is a possibility that the Bono will continue to decrease in size and potentially disappear altogether. Dedy Endoni’s story revolves around the Kampar River as a vital lifeline for coastal communities.



My greatest dream is to no longer see plastic waste in the river, so that visitors who come to Teluk Meranti will want to return again and again because of its cleanliness. Hopefully, Rivers are Life will not stop here but will continue to monitor until there is no more plastic waste being dumped into the river.

30

Minute surf ride on the Bono

13.5

Mile long tidal bore

20

Foot high waves



Every river starts with a drop.
Rivers are Life is just getting started.
Join the movement.

www.RiversAreLife.com

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RIVERS
are LIFE

